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Congressman Pence Delivers Krieble Speech at Heritage Foundation Event

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Rep. Mike Pence

Resource Bank

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As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you for the overly generous introduction.

It brings to mind another time when a woman introducing me got caught up in the enthusiasm of the moment and concluded her introduction with the statement, "there are so few great men in American politics today, I give you Congressman Mike Pence!"

Later, on the way home with my wife, I asked, "what did you think of the introduction?"

She said, "It was ok."

To which I replied, "you know, if you think about it objectively, there are very few great men in American politics today."

Mrs. Pence replied, "I know there's one fewer than you think there is!"

The introduction I prefer is that I am a Christian, a Conservative and a Republican in that order.

I am deeply humbled to deliver the Krieble Lecture along with my dear friend Congressman Jeff Flake whose courage and optimism incite the memory of another legislator from Arizona, the late Barry Goldwater. We are both honored to appear at the Heritage Foundation's Resource Bank meeting today.

The example of Robert H. Krieble has been an inspiration to me since my days as a state think

tank president and my first Resource Bank in 1992. Mr. Kriebel's dogged advancement of the principles of freedom in the Soviet Union sowed the seeds that felled that wall and I am honored to speak in his memory.

Picture, if you will, a ship at sea. Shoulders back, a proud captain steps onto the sunlit deck of a tall ship plying the open seas of a simpler time. Its sails full and straining in the wind, its crew is tried and true, its hull, mast and keel are strong, but beneath the waves, almost imperceptibly, the rudder has veered off course and, in time, the captain and crew will face unexpected peril.

The conservative movement today is like that tall ship with its proud captain: strong, accomplished but veering off course into the dangerous and uncharted waters of big government republicanism.

I make this assertion quite aware that I do so before so many who have done so much for the cause of conservative values.

As this Resource Bank comes to a close and we reflect on battles past and future, the words of a young King David standing in the Valley of Elam just moments before facing a Goliath seem appropriate when he said, "without a vision the people perish" and he asked his countrymen, "is there not a cause?"

Conservatives like you gathered here never suffer that question.

Conservatives have the vision.

Conservatives know the cause: to "establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity."

And by the standards of these fundamental objects of the republic, American conservatives can take considerable pride in the past three years. The ship of conservative Republican government in Washington is strong.

And our movement is strong.

In promoting national security, economic prosperity and the sanctity of human life, conservatives made measurable gains in 2003.

Under the leadership of President George W. Bush and a Republican Congress, we have provided for the common defense, which the Federalist reminds us is the first and most fundamental object of all.

Ours was a nation under attack as I stood on the east lawn of the Capitol on September 11, 2001.

I stood beneath a sky filled with mud brown smoke, people running in every direction...F-16's going supersonic at treetop level to intercept an inbound menace over Pennsylvania...and in the

midst of the chaos of that time, stood George W. Bush, his arm draped over the shoulder of a bone-weary fireman,
speaking courage through a bullhorn to a listening nation.

And we saw those words matched by deeds of equal valor.

These are the deeds that ousted the Taliban in Afghanistan, and have now defeated and captured the butcher of Baghdad.

As I stood six weeks ago amidst the opulence of the palace of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad—now the headquarters of the Coalition Authority in Iraq—I thought of that verse in Psalm 49, "they may name their estates after themselves, but they leave their wealth to others...this is the fate of fools."

A fate brought on by the leadership of George W. Bush.

These are the deeds that have yielded a safer America and a safer world, visible to all but an angry, frustrated few who remain stubbornly and willfully blind.

Through it all, Republicans in Congress and conservatives throughout the land have stood steadfastly behind our President, whose personal courage and bold leadership have made our families measurably safer.

To provide for the common defense at home.

And to project power in the national interest abroad.

And since conservatives were the margin in the disputed election of 2000, because of conservatism, America is defending freedom at home and abroad.

At the same time, we have promoted the general welfare with the only means that ever works - the means that unleashes the enterprise and initiative of the American taxpayer.

Under the leadership of President Bush and the Republican Congress, two successive tax cuts have provided the largest tax relief since the days of Ronald Reagan.

Just as they began to do in 1983, the positive results are now pouring in with each day's economic news.

Americans are going back to work.

Businesses are expanding and this president's determination to act on his conservative Republican principles is the reason for our returning prosperity.

And 31 years since *Roe v. Wade*, we can finally celebrate progress in securing the unalienable right to life for millions of unborn Americans.

Thanks to the unselfish, unflagging efforts of conservatives who have devoted themselves to being the voice for the voiceless, we can now point to the first major legislative victory since the legalization of abortion in 1973.

A Republican Congress passed a ban of "partial birth abortion" and this Republican president signed it into law.

But despite these enormous conservative achievements, there are troubling signs that the ship of conservative governance is off course.

While Ronald Reagan said famously, "government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem" many Republicans-even many who call themselves conservatives-see government increasingly as the solution to every social ill and, let us be clear on this point, this is a historic departure from the limited government traditions of our party and millions of its most ardent supporters.

And this shift to faith in government is especially clear to me.

Not because I am a congressman, but because not long ago, as I watched the children's animated movie "Ice Age" with my kids I realized...I am the frozen man.

You remember the frozen man...born in a simpler time, slips into the snow and thaws out years later in a more sophisticated age.

Well, I first ran for Congress in 1988. An entrenched Democratic majority controlled Congress, frustrating President Reagan at every turn.

A band of heroic House conservatives were challenging Speaker Jim Wright and welfare state politics; a balanced federal budget was as much a fantasy as a Republican majority in Congress...but some of us believed.

We believed we could reduce the size and scope of government and halt the slow march to socialism embodied in the welfare state politics of the left.

I lost my bid in 1988 and again in 1990.

There's a saying in politics: "When you're out, you're out!"

Well, I was out for 10 years.

And when I was finally elected to Congress in 2000, I was like the frozen man...frozen before the revolution, thawed out after it was over...a minuteman who showed up 10 years late!

A decade ago, when I first ran for Congress, Republicans dreamed of eliminating the federal Department of Education and returning control of our schools to parents, communities and

states.

Ten years later, all thawed out, I took my oath of office in the 107th Congress to join the revolution and they hand me a copy of H.R. 1...One...as in our Republican Congress' number one priority.

The "No Child Left Behind Act."

The largest expansion of the federal Department of Education since it was created by President Jimmy Carter!

In the end, myself and about 30 House conservatives fought against the bill and were soundly defeated by our own colleagues.

Our Reaganite belief that education was a local function was labeled "far right" by Republicans and the President signed the bill into law with a smiling Ted Kennedy at his side.

Conservatives were told to bear up...that this was the exception, not the rule.

And so, relieved to have that experience behind me, I anxiously awaited a new H.R. 1 for a new Congress...an H.R. 1 I could be proud of. And so at the onset of the 108th, I was handed another H.R. 1...as in the Republican Congress' number one priority...the Medicare Prescription Drug Bill.

The largest new entitlement since 1965!

To the frozen man it was obvious.

Another Congress.

Another H.R.1.

And another example of the ship of our movement veering off course.

Actually this bill started out promising. The president asked Congress for a very limited program...extending existing welfare benefits to seniors just above the poverty level where most of the one in four seniors without prescription drug coverage reside.

Many conservatives, me included, were prepared to support this limited benefit. I told the president we shouldn't make seniors choose between food, rent and prescription drugs...we were a better country than that.

But instead of giving the president the limited benefit he requested, the Congress...the land of the \$400 hammer...set sail to create the largest new entitlement since 1965...a massive one-size-fits-all entitlement that would place trillions in obligations on our children and grandchildren without

giving any thought to how we were going to pay for it.

Conservatives in the House were faced with a difficult choice...oppose the president we love...or support the expansion of the big government we hate.

In the end, with the stalwart support of the Heritage Foundation and its courageous president, twenty-five rebels decided to make a stand for the principle of limited government.

It is said, "in fire gold is tested" and so it is. While much has been made of the pressure that my colleagues and I endured, we also witnessed the unprecedented pressure placed on the Heritage Foundation and its president to conform to the majority's will. Instead of capitulating, Ed Feulner, Stuart Butler and The Heritage Foundation confirmed the confidence of tens of thousands of their supporters over the decades by standing firm. And, Ed, we will be forever grateful.

When all the votes were counted, we were one rebel short.

In the end the bill passed.

The welfare state expanded.

And the ship of conservative government veered off course.

But, as recent developments suggest, I will always believe that the stand we took mattered. Even in defeat.

You know, sometimes a small group of people can take a stand, be defeated and still make a difference.

Like in 1836 when less than 200 men fought against thousands of Mexican forces to defend an ancient Christian mission on the plains of Texas.

Though they died to the last man, the Texas volunteers within those missionary walls exacted such a horrific toll on the Army of Santa Anna, that his aid, Col. Juan Almonte privately noted, "One more such glorious victory and we are finished."

And so they were.

The inspiration of the men who made their stand at the Alamo fueled the victory that Sam Houston would lead just six weeks later.

"One more such glorious victory and we are finished."

One more big government education bill.

One more new government entitlement.

One more compromise of who we are as limited government Republicans, and our majority could be finished.

So then, the state of the movement:

Strong, on the advance, but veering off course from our commitment to limited government.

The time has come for conservatives to retake the helm of this movement and renew our commitment to fiscal discipline and to what we know to be true about the nature of government:

Conservatives know that government that governs least governs best.

Conservatives know as government expands, freedom contracts.

Conservatives know that government should never do for a man what he can and should do for himself.

As I think of these timeless principles, I think of Ronald Reagan.

I met President Reagan in the summer of 1988.

I was a 29 year-old candidate for Congress and he was winding down a presidency that changed the world.

It was a candidate photo-op in the Blue Room of the White House.

I was determined to say something of meaning to the great man.

After we exchanged pleasantries, I told him I was grateful for everything he had done for the country and everything he had done to inspire my generation to believe in America again.

He seemed surprised, his cheeks appeared to redden with embarrassment and he said, "Well, Mike, that's a very nice thing of you to say."

Moments later in the ballroom he took a minute to respond to my and others' accolades with characteristic humility and optimism saying:

"Many of you have thanked me for what I did for America but I want you to know I don't think I did anything-the American people decided it was time to right the ship and I was just the captain they put on the bridge when they did it."

As I said in January of this year in my address to CPAC in Washington, it's time for conservative Americans to do what Reagan did.

It's time for conservative Americans to right the ship again.

To celebrate our great Republican President and Congress as they lead our nation's progress in national security, economic prosperity and the value of human life.

But also to see her listing to port...in the direction of big government and set her right again.

And to know that this is not a sign of disloyalty but of true loyalty to principle.

To know that when a ship is approaching a rocky coast, the life of the ship and its crew depends on the navigator with his sextant to counsel the captain and crew to steer clear of the shoals and, if need be, to forcefully oppose the captain when the fate of the ship hangs in the balance.

And in the months since I first delivered this challenge, conservatives, including many in this room, have done just that...

In newsprint, on talk radio and cable news, conservatives have spoken with integrity and courage to our leaders in Washington about the error of our present heading.

And the ship is turning.

Since that day in November when I, and a great many others, spoke words of admonition to our President and the leaders in Congress, there is evidence that a course correction is underway.

Just in the past few months, this President has asked Congress to ensure sustained economic growth by making his tax cuts permanent, has called for restraints on federal spending and produced a budget that holds the growth of the discretionary federal government to less than 1 percent and has made it clear that he would veto the upcoming highway bill if it raises taxes or busts the budget.

And after weeks of confusion from Massachusetts to California, this President has brought moral clarity to the debate over same-sex marriage by calling on Congress to pass a Constitutional Amendment to protect marriage.

The President rightly called marriage, "the most enduring human institution," and so it is. Marriage was ordained by God, confirmed by law, is the glue of the American family and the safest harbor for children.

This, then, is our cause.

To stand with our captain as he leads us well, to right the ship in that where she is adrift, and to support his every effort to set her right.

And, as Robert Kriebel knew, this cause will prevail.

Our labors for liberty are never in vain.

For the cause of freedom is not our cause but, as a young King David knew, the cause is His - the author and finisher of our faith and our freedom.

It is written that, "it is for freedom that Christ has set you free."

And I believe, with all my heart, that He who set this miracle of democracy on this these wilderness shores will see the cause of freedom through every tomorrow until, by his grace, the veil of tyranny is lifted from every corner of planet earth.

Thank you Heritage Foundation, for the honor of addressing you and thank you each for all you do to keep the cause of conservative values alive in this shining city on the hill, this last best hope of earth, these United States of America.

Rep. Mike Pence